

## James 2:19-20

The term ceremonial deism was coined in 1960 by the former dean of the Law School at Yale University to defend public declarations of God's existence. In one Supreme Court case the justices defended religious expressions in the public square because these expressions, "... *as a form of ceremonial deism, have lost through rote repetition any significant religious content.*" [Charles R. Swindoll] Not only have the mottos lost their meaning through rote repetition but you are free to say them without being obligated to live by them.

James introduces us to three different kinds of faith. Two of them are useless; one of them is genuine. Genuine faith obeys the Word "*doers of the Word*" (chp. 1:22). In chapter two he describes "dead faith." Dead faith is nothing more than words without works; at first glance it looks pious, but on closer inspection, there is no personal participation (vs. 14). James show us another kind of faith which we will call **demonic faith**. Demonic faith as with ceremonial deism is all words without any meaning (vs. 19).

### **Demonic faith is recognition without relationship**

The *Shema* is taken from **Deuteronomy 6:4**. The Hebrew verb "shema" means "to hear." *Sh'ma Yis'ra'eil Adonai Eloheinu Adonai echad.* "Hear, Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One." **Deuteronomy 6:5**, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." James is saying is there is a difference between recognizing the truth about God's existence and loving Him. You can say He exists without giving your heart to Him.

Our world is filled with people who recognize the existence of God. They may even be able to say the creeds of their denomination, but it hasn't become a part of their lives. Unfortunately, the church is also filled with those who can quote Scripture, name the 10 commandments, tell you the day they were baptized, or the day they joined the church, but there is no evidence that God is a part of their life.

### **Demonic faith is acknowledgment without acceptance**

Billions of people are monotheists, from Islam to Catholicism to Protestantism, 7th Day Adventism, and the Jehovah's Witnesses. All these millions could say the creed, there is only one true and living God.

But not all of them will go further and say:

- God became flesh (**John 1:1-2**)
- God the Son was given (**John 3:16**)
- We happen to love Him because He first loved us (**I John 4:1-3**)
- To as many as received Him (Jesus Christ) to them He gave the right to become children of God (**John 1:12**).

*"Did it ever occur to you that Hell will one day be filled with monotheists? Ceremonial deists who had the religious ducks all lined up. James wants us to understand that the demons have their religious facts straight."* [Charles R. Swindoll]

*"Doesn't it shock you as much as it probably shocked this original Jewish audience, dispersed throughout the empire, to discover that demons have faith? Does it shock you to come face to face with the truth that demons are not atheists or agnostics?"* [Warren W. Wiersbe]

- The demons don't debate who created the universe- they were there. Yet unfallen, they sang praises to God with the entire angelic host together as the universe was created by God the Son (**Job 38 & Colossians 1**)
- The demons don't debate the crucifixion and death of Christ on the cross- they howled in delight on that hill when at first they thought they had defeated Christ
- They don't argue over a literal resurrection of Christ- they fled in utter fear, dismay, and defeat from that scene
- Demons never wonder if the Bible is telling the truth in fact, they are evidently aware of the judgment described in the last book of the Bible in Revelation chapter 20 – they believe it
- The devil and the demons are astute theologians

## James 2:19-20

Jesus encountered a demon possessed man who cried out, “*What business do we have with each other, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time . . . and they begged Christ to cast them into the herd of swine.*” (**Mark 5:1-13**)

In **Mark 3:11**, we’re told that whenever a demon possessed individual came into the presence of Christ, “*They would fall down before Him and shout, ‘You are the Son of God!’*”

In those brief statements, we discover that these demons believe:

- In the deity of Christ—He was the Son of God
- They believed He had the power to control them—to send them wherever He wanted
- They believed He was their coming judge
- They believed their future judgment would involve torment
- They acknowledge the person and power and primacy of God the Son

Demonic faith is the kind of faith in which a person states they believe in heaven and want to go there. However, they want heaven without Christ, since they’ve had nothing to do with Christ on earth. What would they do with Christ in heaven?

### **Demonic faith is reverence without repentance**

James reveals in verse 19b: *the demons also believe and they tremble.*” It’s almost as if James is saying, “You say that you believe? Where is the evidence in your life? Since there is none . . . repent. The demons cannot repent – they tremble.

The word translated “*tremble*” is the Greek word *phrisso* (φρισσω) it means to have one’s hair stand on end, to shudder or to bristle. The word carries the idea of being filled with fright like the way you tense up when you’re suddenly afraid. The noun form of this verb is the word *frike* (φρικη) which gives us our transliterated word, freaky. The thought of God literally freaks the demons out. The tense of the verb indicates that they are constantly shuddering in fear at the truth about God.

They are afraid of Him, but they will not surrender to Him! Those individuals today who are filled with demonic faith are likewise in awe and fearful reverence of Christ, but they will not submit to Him. They will choose their own sin and refuse to repent. They might be afraid of standing before God, but they will not surrender to Him.

Those who worship with the demonic faith will acknowledge historical facts about God, Christ, the Bible, and the church. They will get their facts straight, but they have not bent their knee, their heart, and their will to say, “Christ is my Lord.” They may revere Jesus Christ to a certain point, but they will not repent and desire to please Him as their Lord.

*“Demonic faith—which is, I believe, the foundation of most of the religious systems in the world. Any and every generation wants a god without any obligation; they want God without the demands of godliness. They want to live a life without limits and they want to live in heaven without Him.”* [Stephen Davy]

In Acts 16, Paul and Silas, while in jail, told the jailor, “*Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.*” That preposition “*in*” “*believe in*” means to move toward and rest upon. Not just believe that Jesus exists, but move toward Him in faith and rest upon Him alone for your salvation and you will be saved.

### **Application:**

What specific actions demonstrate that my faith is more than demonic faith (i.e. recognition without a relationship, acknowledgment without acceptance, and reverence without repentance?)